

most lenient aesthetic standard. Whenever he glanced, proudly possessive, at the disgruntled painting, the offense was unforgivable. The wound would never be redressed.

The painting remained in this intolerable state. It waited, with waning hope, to be sold into the collection of a more sympathetic connoisseur. With favorable company, as the stablemate of first-rate pictures, it would project its value to compel a truthful vision. It would be admired by the greatest of all visual critics.

Protesting its unnatural environment, the painting waited until it was shown by the owner to an important guest: then it dismayed the spectators by literally shrinking, leaving wallpaper between its margins and the clumsy frame. The owner tried to restretch it -- ripping it slightly. He phoned an art restorer, who rushed over immediately with a kit of restorative chemicals. But they were for a different period, and changed the painting's identity.

An art appraiser was called in. The owner trembled, dreading a terrible depreciation. This was confirmed. The painting, now not recognizable from what it was, had its value lowered to the "worthless" category. The owner gathered spittle in his mouth, enough for stamping many envelopes: he voided it on his former asset, and summoned the most disreputable auctioneer to dispense of an object so perverse in its disloyalty that a profit would never be made on it. In the auctioneer's van, the painting resumed its former size, as well as its original shapes and colors. And it was free of the frame, as a bulky woman from her unmanageable corset.

INCREASED UNEMPLOYMENT THAT FINALLY REACHES THE PHILOSOPHICAL STAGE

A man was arrested for unemployment. While in jail, he filled out an application form, and sent it to a prospective employer. The answer came back that because of his jail record, it was not the company's policy to hire him. This additional unemployment, to the regret of the warden, for whom the man had been on model behavior, increased the prison sentence, and automatically made him undesirable for civilian employment. This, coupled with the prisoner's record of poverty, classified him as a social outcast, which in turn imposed another severe penalty. Under heavy guard, the man was removed to an unescapable chamber. There, in the eyes of the law, his unemployment reached the incurable stage, and he was retried, and given a life

sentence, with an additional half a life tagged on to punish him for being so hardened. By now a confirmed public enemy, he has, in mere self defense, taken to philosophy. Philosophy, on examining his record, has approved wholeheartedly, recommending him especially for his virtue of reflective idleness, which, in time of habit, has thrown his mind into a frenzy of thought. Since he receives no wages, death expects to find him philosophizing in jail, and by removing him will in no way interfere with his hard-won poverty. Philosophy, his sponsor, expects no profit. Publicity is notoriously absent in this case.

A CAPSULE AFFAIR

A girl thought to herself, "Why are my legs being stared at by that man? Sitting across from me on this bus, he sags in his seat with poor posture, chin lowered into his coat, to study me down up my up; what have I up there, to appeal to him?"

She stopped crossing her legs, discreetly placed her knees together, and demurely lowered her dress tight down on them; this did not discourage her observer.

"Perhaps he loves me," she thought; "for a stranger, that's romantically quick."

She tried to envisage what their baby would look like; to estimate more accurately, she covertly (on the sly) noted the man held captive to her lower charms.

She tossed her head, in derisive triumph: "We've nothing in common," she finally decided to conclude. A pang of regret flared in pity for the rejected stranger. Had she a sister, or girl friend, she might introduce him to? -- for his loneliness was so stubbornly sensual.

Her bus stop approached. She displayed some flesh while getting up: the brute across from her squirmed: was he in pain?

The bus lurched, so she wriggled out with protruding haunches. She had once taken a psychology lesson in school: on this basis, she dismissed that optical intruder from her vainglorious head of hair with the notion, "Obviously oversexed."

The bus waited for a red light; walking on the sidewalk, she passed the window that depicted her fascinated admirer's eyes lost soulfully in the contemplation of her departing self. The bus moved off. "He's gone. But he understood me." It was her final tribute.